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THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND THE RACIAL PROBLEM

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by
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Published in 1954 by the United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizatiō
19 Avenue Kléber, Paris-16e
Printed by M. Blondin, Paris

2889

Printed in France
SS.53.IX.3A

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INTRODUCTION

We have called the present brochure *The Ecumenical Movement and the Racial Problem*. The movement, from whose point of view this brochure is written, is characteristic of the Christian scene in our time in that it unites various different Churches; the World Council of Churches today represents over 160 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox Churches all over the world. The basic views of these Churches and the convictions by which they are guided in this matter are briefly set forth in the present brochure—briefly, because in the space available it is not possible to give an adequate picture of the whole complex involvement of the Churches in the problem of race.

SCHEME

A word of explanation is needed to indicate the structure of this study. We begin with a brief history of the chief contacts between white Protestant Christians and those of other races, especially Africans, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This first chapter paints a brief picture of the Church's role in the rise and fall of slavery and in the period of missionary expansion. It is an essential part of our story, however, since it deals with the time when the white and Negro races were first brought into daily contact. We then proceed to examine the situation in the Churches today in the United States and South Africa. These two countries present situations where the Christian Churches, and especially Protestantism, are faced with the greatest problems and the greatest opportunities in the field of race relations.

Whe then turn to a rather different situation: the role of the Churches in the struggle with National Socialist racialism in Europe. The general question of the relations between Christians and Jews is not chiefly a racial

problem, but in this particular case the Churches were confronted with a racial ideology which forced them to take a stand with regard to race. Our next chapter shows that all the Churches are involved in the problem of interracial relationships, special attention being however given to East Africa and Asia. We conclude the first section with a brief review of what the ecumenical conferences have had to say about race during the last 40 years. The entire first part of the present brochure is therefore an endeavour to show briefly the situation in which the Churches find themselves in respect to race.

In the second part we have tried to look at the question of race as understood in the light of Christian theology: the point of departure is that any discussion of the Church and the race question can only be carried on in the light of the Church's understanding of its own nature. We seek to define what meaning race as such has in the light of the Gospel, and examine the implications of this for racial relations in society at large and the Church's responsibility for such relationships.

We then consider a major issue which confronts the Churches, as Churches, the question of whether separate Church structures along ethnic lines can be justified from the point of view of the Biblical revelation, and in conclusion seek to describe the task which confronts the Churches in the realm of race relations as they move on into the future.

TERMINOLOGY

The subject with which this study deals is so complex that one cannot be wholly consistent in the use of the term "race". For the "race problem" with which the Churches have to deal is not so much a biological as a sociological problem in which theological, cultural and psychological factors all play their part. Again, the racial problem presents itself in many countries in the form of an ethnic problem and so it would be artificial to draw a hard and fast line of demarcation between these two. We recognize that this use of the term is "unscientific" but we believe that this is inevitable until the various sciences have succeeded in working out a common defini-

tion of the term and in getting that definition generally accepted.

There is at least this advantage in the more general and popular usage, that it underlines the relation between the problem of race relations and the problems of national, class or other group relations. Racial conflict is not essentially different from other forms of human conflict. All of them are symptoms of that sense of insecurity and egotism which characterize the human situation. All of them need to be overcome by the faith that in Christ men receive the offer of a security which enables them to treat their fellow-men as brothers.

PART ONE

THE FACTS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Divided Mind of the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century was the period in which, through the inhuman attitude of white men to other races, the seeds were sown for the racial tensions of the modern world. But it was at the same time the era in which here and there a new sense of interracial responsibility began to emerge.

The slave trade with all its horrors reached its climax. At the same time there were men who not only talked vaguely about human rights, but believed in applying them. Jefferson[1] for instance considered that "to keep in slavery beings born with rights equal to ours and who did not differ from us in anything but colour, was an injustice not only barbarous and cruel, but even shameful", but he did not succeed in convincing his fellow countrymen. Dr. Samuel Johnson was "very zealous against slavery in every form", but his admirer and biographer Boswell considered that to abolish the slave trade would be to "shut the gates of mercy on mankind".[2] In novels and poems praises of "le bon sauvage" were sung, but when the Moravian missionaries converted Negro slaves strong objection was made, and they were accused of "teaching the blacks to become better Christians than their masters".[3]

In the life of the Churches of Europe and America we find the same divided mind. Most of them had lost any sense of the supra-racial nature of Christianity. Several of the old Asian and African Churches had virtually disappeared. Little or nothing was known of those which

[1] Quoted from the Memoirs of Philip Mazzei in Helen Hill's book, *George Mason*. Cambridge (U.S.A.), 1938, p. 218.
[2] *Life of Dr. Johnson* (Everyman's Edition), Vol. II, pp. 146-48.
[3] Spangenberg's *Leben von Zinzendorf*, 1774, p. 1171.

still existed. The very few Christians who were engaged in missionary activities were considered fanatics. From the perspective of the West, Christianity seemed to be the religion of the white man, and the coloured races seemed to represent the pagan world. In a time of ecclesiastical formalism few had the spiritual insight and Christian imagination to break through this unconscious identification of religion and race.

That at this time religion rather than colour constituted the primary barrier can be seen from the fact that the few Christian Negroes who came to Europe were warmly welcomed. When Zinzendorf returned from the West Indies in 1739 he brought a Christian Negro to Germany "to visit the congregations".[1] Similarly a Gold Coast Negro completed his studies in Leyden and was ordained a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. A countryman of his became Doctor of Halle University. Philippe Quaque from the Cape Coast studied in England and took Anglican orders.[2]

During the eighteenth century the traffic in slaves grew by leaps and bounds. It is today incomprehensible that so many churchmen participated in the defence of slavery and even of the slave trade. On the other hand the century also produced Christian prophets who raised their voice against such inhuman practices and became pioneers in the struggle against racial prejudice. One of the earliest was John Woolman, the American Quaker, who spent a good part of his life trying to convince his fellow countrymen that "liberty was the natural right of all men equally" and that slavery was wrong, because Africans were "human creatures whose souls are as precious as ours".[3] Another American Quaker, Anthony Benezet, in 1771 wrote a brochure against slavery which gave Thomas Clarkson in England the impulse for his lifelong fight against slavery. The celebrated Congregationalist theologian Samuel Hopkins urged the Continental Congress in 1776 to emancipate all African slaves. In Britain John Wesley intervened in the great debate by his "Thoughts on Slavery". How he felt on the subject can be seen from the letter of encouragement which he wrote a few days before his death to Wilberforce and in which he

[1] Spangenberg. Op. cit., p. 1181.
[2] Groves. *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, pp. 151, 175.
[3] *John Woolman's Journal* (Everyman's Edition), p. 54.

said: "Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it."[1]

The Fight Against Slavery

The first important victory in the fight against slavery was the result of the untiring labours of Christians in Britain. Here also the Quakers had done the pioneering work. The two men however who succeeded in mobilizing public opinion against the slave trade were Granville Sharp and William Wilberforce. Sharp, who founded the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and succeeded in establishing the principle that every slave coming to Britain would automatically become free, was a grandson of Archbishop Sharp of York and took a leading part in the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Wilberforce was a leader of the so-called Clapham Sect, a group of Evangelicals in the Church of England who initiated many Christian and humanitarian activities, and played a great role in the creation of the modern missionary movement. He began his parliamentary battle against the slave trade in 1787 and persisted in spite of ridicule and defeat until at last in 1807 the trade was officially abolished throughout the British Empire. Wilberforce built his case very definitely on a religious foundation. He dared to admit in a speech in 1789: "The principle upon which I found the necessity of abolition is not policy, but justice."[2] And in 1792 he added: "There are some persons . . . who declare, without reserve, that religion and justice, and humanity, command the abolition of the slave trade, but that they must oppose the measure, because it is inconsistent with the national interest. I trust and believe that no such argument will be urged this night: for what is it, but to establish a competition between God and mammon and to adjudge preference to the latter? What, but to dethrone the moral governor of the universe, and to fall down and worship the idol of interest?"[3]

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[1] Luccock and Hutchinson. *The Story of Methodism*. New York, p. 205

[2] Memoir of Wilberforce in *Wilberforce: A Practical View*. London, 1837, p. 28.

[3] *Idem*, p. 34.

After the fight against the slave trade came the fight against slavery itself. Once again Wilberforce took the lead. Just before his death the Bill for abolition of slavery passed its second reading in the House of Commons. The "gallery of emancipators" contains many other famous names. There is only space to mention John Smith, missionary of the London Missionary Society, who identified himself with the slaves of Demarara and who, though he has advised against the use of violence, was charged with promoting discontent among the slaves and who died in prison in 1824. His death made a profound impression in Britain and thus proved (in the words of Lord Morley) to be fatal to slavery in the West Indies.[1]

In the United States, Christian opinion with regard to slavery remained for a long time deeply divided. In fact some Churches which at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century had taken a clear stand against slavery found it impossible to maintain that stand in the following decades when, largely owing to the changed economic situation of the South, the case for slavery was defended with increasing vigour. This led to the formation of the anti-slavery societies in the North and to bitter conflicts in many Churches concerning the purpose and methods of these societies. In these discussions a considerable number of Church leaders, especially but not exclusively in the South, sought to defend slavery on theological grounds. On the other hand there were influential churchmen among the leaders of the anti-slavery movement, such as Henry Ward Beecher and Theodore Parker. Harriet Beecher Stowe (sister of Henry Ward Beecher) received her inspiration to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during a New England church service. The depth of feeling on both sides was so great that several Churches were split. Some of these have only succeeded in regaining their unity in our days and some of them are still divided.

It is difficult to arrive at a fair appraisal of the record of American Christianity with regard to slavery. Henry Wilson, who has written the most detailed account of the *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, comes to the conclusion that the great ecclesiastical and missionary organizations faltered and failed, but that a

[1] Kathleen Simon. *Slavery*. London, 1930, p. 218.

struggling minority was never wanting to proclaim their opposition and that in that sense "anti-slavery was the child of Christian faith".[1]

Churches, Missions and the Advance of Underdeveloped Races

Booker T. Washington, the great Negro leader in the days immediately following the abolition of slavery, wrote in his autobiography: "If no other consideration had convinced me of the value of the Christian life, the Christ-like work which the Church of all denominations in America has done during the last 35 years for the elevation of the black man would have made me a Christian."[2] And Alan Paton, when describing the emergence of a new class of African intellectuals, says: "They are in large measure the gift to Africa of Christian missionaries."[3] Have the Christian Churches and missions then had a deliberate policy of giving the non-white races their full place in the affairs of the world? The answer is negative in the sense that they have not been the consistent advocates of a specific political philosophy—but positive, in the sense that through their missionary and educational work they have powerfully contributed to the advance of the various races with which they came in contact, and that it was an inevitable outcome of their work that they became in very many cases the defenders of the human rights of these races.

The relation between the specifically missionary and the general humanitarian concern is remarkably illustrated by the life of David Livingstone. He went out to South Africa as a missionary of the London Missionary Society in 1847. And his main purpose remained unaltered. In 1950 he wrote: "I am a missionary heart and soul. In this service I hoped to live and I wish to die."[4] His early travels were undertaken in order to open up new areas for missionary work. But during these travels he was confronted with the horrible effects of the Arab

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[1] Henry Wilson. *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America.* Vol. III., pp. 718-19.

[2] *Up From Slavery.* The World's Classics. 1945, p. 143 (first edition published in 1901).

[3] Alan Paton. "South Africa To-day". Public Affairs Pamphlet, 1951, p. 23.

[4] Blaikie. *The Life of David Livingstone.* 1906, p. 104.

slave trade. And so he became "convinced that the chief hindrance to the Gospel lay not so much in the refractory wills of individuals as in the great social evils of African society . . ."[1] All his further travels were undertaken with the purpose of ridding Africa of those evils. By opening up Africa for legitimate commerce the commerce in human beings could be stopped, and thus a situation would be created in which missions could operate effectively. The chief immediate task was therefore the abolition of the slave trade. Toward the end of his life he wrote: "If my disclosures should lead to the suppression of the East Coast slave trade, I would esteem that as a far greater feat than the discovery of all the sources together."[2]

Livingstone's life is of course in many ways unique, but the combination of the missionary purpose with active concern for the well-being and advance of the peoples of Africa and Asia has remained a feature of the main stream of the missionary movement. Examples might be taken from many parts of the world. But in view of the recent publication of a very thorough study of the influence of missions upon colonial policy in East Africa—a study written by a professional historian[3] who has no connexion with any missionary society, we will do well to take an illustration from that area.

Mr. Oliver shows that when strong Western influences began to transform the African scene "missionaries felt compelled to enter the political arena and to protect by wider than spiritual methods what they believed to be the interests of the African Church. In these efforts they exercised an influence upon the development of a new phase of colonial policy which no historian of East Africa can afford to ignore."[4] He goes on to describe the patient and effective campaign carried on by Dr. J. Oldham of the International Missionary Council, together with leaders in Church and State, whom he had won for the cause of a truly progressive policy. Already in 1920 missionary leaders insisted that the crucial issues were those about which we hear so much today, namely the adequacy of the reserves, the security of land tenure,

[1] Roland Oliver. *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*. 1952, p. 10.
[2] Blaikie, op. cit., p. 359.
[3] Roland Oliver, op. cit.
[4] Roland Oliver, op. cit., p. 247.

the amount of land alienated to Europeans, the effect of contact with Western civilization upon the tribal system, the adequate representation of native interests in the government of the country.[1] The government accepted some of their claims. Much of the conflict and suffering of the following decades might well have been avoided if the government had followed the lead of the missionaries to a much larger extent.

Another essential contribution which missions have made to the advance of the peoples of Asia and Africa is through education. Dr. Oldham wrote in 1923 that "in some of the British colonies and protectorates in Africa the whole, and in most of the others at least nine-tenths, of the native education is being given in mission schools".[2] The same thing could have been said of other parts of Africa and some parts of Asia. Since 1923 governments have become more active in education, but even today missions carry a very large share of the responsibility for education.

Through this educational work the Churches and missions have at the same time raised up leaders who have in many cases exerted an influence far beyond their own Church, who have become interpreters of their race to the world, and striven for better interracial understanding. It is difficult to overestimate what men like Aggrey of Africa, K. T. Paul, S. K. Datta and Azariah of India, and Kagawa of Japan have done to demonstrate that all races have their specific contributions to make to the common life of the Church and of humanity as a whole.

THE CHURCHES AND RACE IN THE U.S.A.

Gunnar Myrdal gave his well-known work on the situation of the Negro in American life the title *The American Dilemma*. This dilemma exists, he finds, because of the discrepancy between the ideals which nearly all American profess and their actual practices in inter-group relationships. Myrdal recognizes the important part which Christianity has played in the development of the so-called "American Creed", but indicates also that the

[1] *Ibidem*, p. 255.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 268.

Churches of the U.S.A. are themselves caught in the dilemma. On the one hand, they profess that all men have equal dignity and worth in the sight of God, that all stand in equal need of the redemption offered in Christ. On the other hand, the Churches reflect to a very large extent in their practice the mores of the community at large.[1]

The All-Negro Churches

The majority of American Negroes are Protestant Christians. "Probably 8,300,000 of the 14 million Negroes in the U.S.A. belong to some Christian Church, approximately 8 million are Protestants and of this 8 million, approximately 7,500,000 are in separate Negro denominations."[2] The Negro denominations have their origin in the period following the American Civil War when they gained many adherents among the recently freed slaves. The vast majority of Negro Protestants are Baptists or Methodists. The large Negro denominations are organized on national lines closely resembling those of white denominations of the same beliefs. There are no very great differences between Negro and white Churches of the same confession in matters of faith and doctrine nor in forms of worship.

The Negro Church has played and continues to play a leading role in the life of the Negro community at large, its leaders often being the leaders of the community. It is often said that such leaders are reluctant to see racially inclusive Churches develop, since that might mean the loss of their own position. It is however significant that in 1944, 100 leaders of the Negro Churches issued a statement in which they said: "Freedom of worship, if it means anything, means freedom to worship God across racial lines and freedom for a man or woman to join the Church of his or her choice, irrespective of race. . . . Either the Church must be actually

[1] The problem of the Church and Race in the U.S.A. includes the relationships between white Americans of European origin and Negro-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, American Indians. Since the dominant problem, however, is that of Negro-white relationships, this section is confined to a discussion of that aspect only.

[2] Loescher, Frank. *The Protestant Church and the Negro.* New York, 1948, p. 51.

and potentially a Church for all the people, irrespective of race and colour, or it should cease to proclaim the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."[1] It may safely be said that Negro Churches exist in America because the Negro does not feel that there is much hope for his being treated on an equal basis, as a Christian brother, in the majority of Protestant Churches, and that in a great many cases this feeling is justified by the facts.

The Negro problem in the American churches then, as in the country at large, is more a white man's problem than a Negro one; for it is the white group that dominates not only in the social, political and economic spheres of life but in the ecclesiastical as well. Any real changes in the situation depend to a large extent on the change in the attitudes and practice of the white majority. The dilemma constantly facing white Christians is the problem of how to reconcile professed principles of equality with the practices of segregation and discrimination. James Weldon Johnson has said: "The race question involves the saving of black America's body and white America's soul." It is in the soul of white Protestant Christians that the struggle goes on as they see their responsibility for the present situation in their Churches.

The Status of the Negro in White Churches

About 500,000 American Negroes are members of predominantly white denominations. Yet this does not mean that half a million Negro Church members worship together with their white brethren on Sunday morning. The vast majority of them belong to Negro congregations. Two denominations, the Methodists and the Disciples of Christ, have what amount to separate national divisions for their Negro Churches, although Negroes are also represented at their national meetings on an interracial basis. In most other Churches Negro congregations are represented at the local and regional level as well as in the national assemblies in all meetings of the Church. This is true of the American Baptist, United Lutheran and the Protestant Episcopal Churches. The

[1] Quoted by Pope. "Caste in the Church", *Survey Graphic*, January 1947, p. 103.

Presbyterians, U.S.A. and Congregationalists present an anomaly in that there are separate synods or associations for Negro Churches in the South but integration elsewhere. This means then that most Negro clergyman and lay leaders come together with their white brethren only in national or regional denominational meetings.

Yet there is also a very small yet significant percentage of Negroes who belong to "white" congregations. In his study published in 1948 Frank Loescher pointed out that this number did not exceed 8,000 people or one tenth of one per cent of Negro Protestant Christians. He also indicates that in six denominations under study only 4.8 per cent of the local Churches were racially inclusive. A more recent study of three denominations (United Lutheran Church in America, the Congregational Christian Churches and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.) indicates, however, that about 10 per cent of the congregations of these bodies include persons of more than one race. The difference in the statistics is partly due to the different bodies studied, but perhaps also in part to the fact that the situation in the United States is a fluid one and appears to be gradually but definitely changing. It is impossible to indicate the exact rate of change because no figures are available but the fact of the change itself is clearly evident.

Though their numbers remain small, there do then exist interracial congregations in the United States and studies indicate that the number is constantly increasing. To be sure, many of them are to be found in areas where there are relatively few Negroes, and where Negroes are usually better accepted and more fully integrated into the life of the community at large, especially in the New England-Upper New York State region, an area generally considered more sympathetic to the Negro. Loescher's poll shows that already in 1948, 465 of the 4,000 Protestant Episcopal congregations and nearly 400 of the 5,600 Congregational Christian Churches reported one or more persons "of colour" (including Orientals and Mexicans as well as Negroes), in their membership or constituency. Three hundred and sixty-seven Northern Baptist Churches and 73 United Presbyterian likewise reported such an inclusive membership.

The Churches' Role in Negro Education

Although prior to the Emancipation Act the American Churches had played an important role in the movement for the abolition of slavery, and had issued many statements on the subject, they had very little to say specifically about race in the period between 1865 and 1914. This does not mean, however, that the Churches were inactive. The director of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Dr. J. Oscar Lee has written:

"The extensive programme of education of Negroes carried on by the Churches from about 1865 down to the present day in the Southern states speaks more effectively than any pronouncements. This educational programme implied a position on race relations. It affirmed the Negro's right to equal education and opportunity for social and economic development in a society that imposed racial segregation on the Negro. The Church assumed responsibility for providing these opportunities before the states felt that they had a responsibility to do so. Even after the states had admitted their responsibility, the 'separate but equal' educational facilities which the states provided were far from adequate and the educational facilities provided by the Churches and later by private educational institutions continued to be valuable assets in supplementing the educational opportunities available to Negroes in the South. In the early years immediately after emancipation of the slaves, these Church institutions carried on education at the elementary and high school levels as well as at the college level. After public elementary and high schools were open for Negroes throughout the South, many of these institutions were developed into colleges.

"Many of the Negro leaders, at present active in the movement to eliminate racial segregation and to achieve justice for racial minorities in the United States, were educated in these Church-related institutions."[1]

[1] Lee, J. Oscar, in a memorandum of June 1953.

The Reaction of the Churches to Racial Tension and Segregation

In the period following World War I there were acute signs of interracial unrest all over the United States. It was at this time that 24 churchmen, representing 14 denominations, met to set up a common agency for Church action in regard to race. Meeting in Washington D.C. on 21 July 1921, these churchmen organized the Commission on Negro Churches and Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches. The movement which brought about the establishment of this commission was the result of the discussion on racial tensions, and the concern about it that had been widespread among church people.

There were also individual Christians who took action. Even before the conflict was over in 1918 some of the best informed of white Christian leaders in the Southern states initiated a plan to improve racial relations in that area. Two years later they were joined by Negro leaders and the *Interracial Commission* thus set up did much to foster a decline in tensions and bitterness between the races. Under its direction similar interracial bodies were founded in each of the 13 Southern states and in some 800 of the 1,300 countries in these states. Together with the Department of Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Interracial Commission contributed to the movement which led to the reduction in the number of lynchings from 83 in 1919 to 10 in 1929.

With the depression of the thirties came the great awakening on the part of the American Churches to the problems of society. Forty statements dealing with race were adopted during this decade: "And yet the denominational pronouncements are quite general, still dealing for the most part only with the gross aspect of the disabilities and injustices experienced by Negroes. The majority of the statements focus on the most obvious evil—lynching—and scarcely a word is uttered on the more controversial and more basic issue of economic discrimination. Indeed, discrimination is rarely mentioned."[1] The basic problem of the segregation of the

[1] Loescher, Frank. *The Protestant Church and the Negro.* New York. 1948, p. 31.

races drew the official attention of only two denominations. "The pronouncements (of this decade) are as revealing for what they do not say as for what they do say. An examination of them quickly shows the extent to which the Church was unaware of the shortcomings of its own practices."[1] The next decade, the forties, however, was marked by an important shift in outlook on the part of the Churches. "Instead of continuing to place emphasis on 'equal rights' for Negroes, several denominations . . . called for 'the same rights' without any distinction of race or colour. And instead of concentrating attention on secular practices, several denominational and interdenominational bodies became introspective and demanded sweeping changes in their own policies. The first significant sign of this shift came at the Oxford Conference in 1937."[2] The American Churches felt particularly challenged by this world ecumenical gathering to examine their own racial practices.[3] Consequently several denominations examined the situation in their Church-related colleges and universities. Some set up special study commissions to look into the racial practices within their own denomination, and some set aside periods in which race relations would be the subject of major concern throughout their denominations.

A very significant pronouncement on an ecumenical level was made in 1946 when the Federal Council of Churches issued a statement entitled "The Churches and Race Relations". This statement has since been adopted in even stronger form by the more inclusive National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. It is interesting to note that this body, representing the major Protestant and Orthodox Churches in the United States, saw fit to change the name of the document to "The Churches and Segregation". The earlier title implies that "the Church" should have an interest in the general problem of "race relations". The second indicates that the individual "Churches" have a responsibility about the particular problem of "segregation", the basic offence to Christian community.

Being the official policy of the chief American ecume-

[1] Loescher, Frank, op. cit., p. 33.
[2] Pope, L. "Caste in the Church" in *Survey Graphic*. January 1947.
[3] See above, section: "The Voice of the Ecumenical Conferences."

nical body, this statement bears closer examination. It endeavours to "set forth some of the clear implications of Christ's command: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' ". It first points out the evil effects of segregation : (a) as an expression of a "superior race attitude"; (b) in poisoning the minds of youth; (c) in subjecting millions of Americans to humiliation and in denying them equal services and equal opportunities in economic life; (d) in weakening the nation's moral position both at home and in the international sphere, and (e) in increasing racial tension generally. The statement then comes directly to the point: "Above all, the principle of segregation is a denial of the Christian faith and ethic which stems from the basic premise taught by our Lord that all men are created the children of God. The pattern of segregation is diametrically opposed to what Christians, believe about the worth of persons and if we are to be true to the Christian faith we must take our stand against it."[1]

While recognizing the failure of the community at large in its racial practices, the National Council confesses that the Churches are sometimes among the worst offenders. "There are large areas of the public education field where racial separation is not practiced and only a relatively few Churches which are racially inclusive in practice."[2] The statement notes, with satisfaction, that many of the Churches have endorsed the 1946 statement of the Federal Council. It calls attention to the continuing segregation practices of the Churches in their congregations and also in their hospitals, colleges and seminaries.

The heart of the statement itself reads: "The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., in its organizational structure and operation, renounces and earnestly recommends to its member Churches that they renounce the pattern of segregation based on race, colour or national origin as unnecessary and undesirable and a violation of the Gospel of love and human brotherhood. While recognizing that historical and social factors make it more difficult for some Churches than for others

[1] *The Churches and Segregation.* An Official Statement and Resolution adopted by the General Board of National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in Chicago, Ill., 11 June 1952, p. 5.
[2] *Idem*, p. 5.

to realize the Christian ideal of non-segregation, the Council urges all of its constituent members to work steadily and progressively towards a non-segregated Church as the goal which is set forth in the faith and practice of the early Christian community and inherent in the New Testament idea of the Church of Christ. As proof of our sincerity in this renunciation, the National Council of Churches will work for a non-segregated Church and a non-segregated community."[1] The report concludes by urging the Churches to "ascertain the facts about their own practices", "eliminate segregation from their own practices", and "help to relieve community tensions".

In view of this statement and others like it adopted by the several denominations, it is clear that the American Churches have made great strides in what they have had to say about the race problem. "It is difficult to imagine anything more that many denominations can do in the way of pronouncements on the fundamental issue of segregation in the Church."[2] The question then is what are the Churches in America actually *doing* to improve the situation in their own life and in the life of society.

The Churches' Programme

The American Churches are engaged in a conscious attempt to emphasize to their membership the need for interracial brotherhood. They recognize that the building up of a truly integrated Church depends to a large extent on an improvement of the basic attitudes of Church members to those of other races in all aspects of life. Negroes will not be ready to enter inclusive Churches until they feel that they will be accepted in every way by their white brethren. In one New England town, for example, the leadership of the large (largely white) congregation was anxious to merge with the small Negro Church of the same denomination. In this case, however, it was the Negro Church which was reluctant to merge. Its members presumably could not believe that *all* the members of the larger Church would truly include them

[1] *Idem*, p. 11.
[2] Loescher, op. cit., p. 42.

in their common life. For this reason the task of the Church leadership is to work for better understanding in all fields and especially to engender a sense of urgency among Church members.

The National Council of Churches maintains a Department of Racial and Cultural Relations the purpose of which is "to assist the Churches to bring their life and work into accordance with the mandate arising inescapably from the Christian Gospel for the realization of the principle of brotherhood and its corollary, full opportunity for all minority racial and cultural groups; to assist the Churches as they work for participation by all groups without discrimination and segregation in the Council, in churches, education, employment, housing, recreation, heath services, government and all other aspects of American society". Ten of the denominations have departments with paid executives and carry on a permanent programme in this field. Each year in February the Churches observe "Race Relations Sunday", when many Negro and white preachers exchange pulpits and interracial services are often held. In the summer of 1949, the first Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations was organized. This proved so successful that in 1950 two such institutes were conducted and since then three have been held each year. These institutes, sponsored by the several Churches and the National Council, seek to help the leadership of the Protestant Churches on the local level to solve practical problems as they move toward the goals of "non-segregated Churches in a non-segregated society". Under the sponsorship of local councils of Churches, interracial clinics are held in cities and towns all over the nation, in which the particular problems of that area are studied and solutions suggested. The local councils in many cases also carry out a programme of interracial education within their own communities. A wide place is given by most denominations in their Church periodicals, Church school materials and at summer conferences to the problem of race.

In some cases the Churches take the lead in bringing whites and Negroes together. In 1944, for example, the Churches in the almost exclusively "white" Vermont State invited 77 children from a large New York City Negro church to spend two weeks in the homes of their

members. Most of the children lived on farms and in villages and participated in the life of the communities. This same plan with minor changes has been adopted in other sections of the country and now every summer many children thus act as unconscious pioneers in the building up of interracial understanding.

Furthermore there are those people who are anxious that something be done to make the Church interracial *now*. Some specific ways adopted are the following:

1. In transitional areas, especially in large cities where the population is changing from white to Negro, some congregations make a decided attempt to integrate the Negroes coming into the area into their life and membership, without losing the white membership which may be moving into other areas.
2. Several deliberately interracial Churches have been created, to challenge the prevalent system of segregation. There is the type which tends to appeal to highly educated younger people and frequently is also interdenominational and there is the denominational Church created in an interracial area which is intended to serve the community without regard to race and is less self-consciously interracial.
3. There are a few of the older established white Churches which have become racially inclusive because of the deep convictions of their ministers and enlightened laymen.
4. Furthermore interracial fellowships "have grown up as institutions subsidiary to regular Churches with the purpose of giving people of different racial and religious backgrounds an opportunity to worship together if they desire and with the further intent of helping the existing Churches to become interracial".[1]
5. There are some individual white Christians who have joined Negro Churches while retaining membership in their own white congregations.

The numbers of Christians undertaking this kind of interracial pioneering are still relatively few. They are significant not so much because of their numbers as because they blaze the trail which others may later be able to follow.

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1 Oniki, S. Garry. "Interracial Churches in American Protestantism," *Social Action*, January 1950, p. 9.

Signs of Advance

A few examples of recent happenings will serve to indicate the position which the Churches and their leaders occupy in the present-day American scene. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern) on 31 March 1952 voted to abolish its Negro synod and absorb the Negro congregations into the regional synods. The Methodist Church in May 1952 issued a directive to ensure full participation for all in the national organs and meetings of the Church and approved legislation allowing Negro churches to withdraw from the Central Jurisdiction (Negro) to the regional jurisdictions. In March 1953, the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ issued a statement which read in part: "National and regional meetings of the National Council or any of its units shall be held only where there are facilities (in hotels or other places of meeting) that are open to all participants without regard to race. . . ."[1]

In the South, where racial separation has the backing of both law and custom, there are signs of change. The Norfolk (Virginia) Ministers' Association has voted unanimously to end racial segregation in its preaching mission and to abandon such a mission if it could not be held interracially. In November 1952 the Georgia Council of Churches was founded on an interracial basis, thus joining the ranks of the Virginia and North Carolina Councils. In the same year the members of the theological faculty of the University of the South resigned their positions when the University's board of regents refused to admit Negroes on the grounds that Tennessee Law forbade it. This incident is worthy of note partly because it is the only case that has come to public attention in the past four or five years in which a Southern seminary has taken a negative position on the admission of Negroes. In 1953, however, the trustees of the same school reversed the decision, under much criticism from Church leaders and others. Throughout the nation and especially in the South, church-related educational institutions have been quietly admitting Negroes, until now such admission is no longer news. This does not mean,

[1] Ecumenical Press Service, 20 March 1953, p. 3.

however, that a long road does not lie ahead before the Churches are able either in their own life or in their affiliated institutions to give a convincing picture of that true Christian community that transcends all racial barriers.

While it is true then that the American Churches are not truly interracial, it can be said that they are aware that they ought to be. On the national, regional and local levels the Churches are taking action to combat prejudice, educate their own members and work for fairer treatment for all in society at large. Individuals, motivated by their Christian faith, are at work in countless ways for the amelioration of interracial relations. The situation in the United States is a dynamic one and the Churches are very much involved in the struggle for a solution to "the American Dilemma".

THE CHURCHES AND RACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The racial situation in South Africa is unique in that three factors operate at one and the same time. In the first place a large number of Europeans live in those territories (which are to them their home country) among a very much larger number of Bantus. In the second place a considerable number of Asians have migrated to this area. In the third place the impact of modern Western civilization with its industrialism has a more devastating and disintegrating effect on the old collectivistic rural society of African tribes than in areas where Europeans are not represented in such large numbers. These three factors together explain why the problems of interracial relationships in this part of the world are more difficult to solve than almost anywhere else.

The last mentioned factor must be specially emphasized, because it means that one important—possibly in the long run the most important—aspect of what is generally described as the race problem is not primarily a question of race, but a sociological problem. In his widely read *Cry the Beloved Country* Alan Paton describes the young African from a simple rural background for whom the great modern city of Johannesburg becomes a place of perdition. The statistics of crime and

the reports of missionaries and social workers show that this inexorable process of social and moral disintegration goes on in the lives of tens of thousands of young Africans. This "detribalization" which uproots men from their traditional social framework without giving them new roots or new moral foundations can only have devastating effects; it is constantly being intensified as South Africa develops, and nobody seems able or willing to stop it. Now it is clear that this sociological phenomenon has a double bearing on the relations between the races. On the one hand it creates a class of uprooted Bantus who have little or nothing to lose and can therefore easily become the prey of irresponsible leaders. On the other hand it confirms among the white population the fear of violent attempts to solve the race problem. The great question is therefore whether the political and industrial leaders of South Africa will have the insight and courage to deal with this basic social, economic, and above all, moral problem which is becoming increasingly the crucial problem of South Africa and which has its repercussions in Central Africa.

The Churches have a very considerable role to play in this situation. Through their missionary work they have exerted and still exert a profound influence on African society. In South Africa about 50 per cent of the Africans have become Christians, and a very large part of the educational and medical services to the population are in missionary hands. Again, the practice of the Churches with regard to race relations has had a considerable bearing on the development of the general social pattern. What is that practice?

Let us begin with the Afrikaans-speaking, that is to say, the Dutch Reformed Churches. Up to the year 1857 these Churches were in principle and practice fully interracial Churches, though is should be added that until that time the number of their Bantu or coloured members was small. After that date separate congregations began to be organized for the different racial groups, and later separate "mission Churches" for the coloured and Bantus were formed. Owing to energetic missionary activity these mission Churches have grown considerably. Their existence as separate Churches has not infrequently been defended on the basis that racial segregation is a Christian duty. More recently it has been justified on

practical grounds rather than grounds of principle, though certain Old Testament passages concerning the separation of the Jewish people from the surrounding peoples are still being used as evidence that segregation in Church life is at least permissible. At the same time it is emphasized that "in spite of walls of separation, the unity of the faith must, however imperfectly, be practised". For "we are members of one another and need each other".[1]

In practice this means that the Dutch Reformed Mission Churches with their Bantu or coloured membership are organized as separate Church bodies which are only linked with the white mother-Churches through the missionaries and whose congregations have practically no contact with the white congregations. On the other hand the extent of this mission work, proportionally one of the most considerable missionary enterprises in the world, and its medical, educational and social effects upon the population are important factors in the advance of the Bantus.

The English-speaking Churches take their stand against the principle of segregation in Church life. At one of their recent common meetings they stated: "We affirm that the Church planted by God in this country is multi-racial and must remain so. This is one of its glories."[2] They are convinced that loyalty to the New Testament conception of the Church demands interracial fellowship with the Church. A recent report on the subject says: "The New Testament evidence suggests that people of all races mixed freely in the Christian Church. . . . The New Testament offers no support for racial or national Churches whether locally or in wider areas. This is not to say that difference of language, custom, etc. may not sometimes make it advisable for Christians to meet separately for worship, but it does mean that there is no New Testament authority for regarding racial separation within the Church as either essential or desirable."[3]

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[1] These quotations are from the report of the most representative conference which the Dutch Reformed Churches have held on the race problem. This Congress under the auspices of the Federal Missions Council was held in Bloemfontein in 1950.

[2] Report of the Rosettenville Conference of the Christian Council in South Africa in 1949.

[3] *Race—What does the Bible say?* Report of the Commission appointed by the Christian Council of South Africa, 1952, p. 24.

With regard to their practice, most of these Churches have synods and assemblies in which the different races are represented. But in the ordinary life of local congregations multi-racial services of worship are the exception rather than the rule. Here again the general pattern of social segregation makes it difficult for the Churches to carry out the principle of supra-racial fellowship.

It is more difficult to generalize about the attitude of the Churches toward the racial problems of South African society. With regard to the Dutch Reformed Churches the best starting point is the important conference which was held under the auspices of the Federal Missions Council in Bloemfontein in 1950. That conference sought to formulate a constructive racial policy and took a most definite stand in favour of the principle of apartheid,[1] but it made it quite clear that this was not meant as a mere maintenance of the present *status quo*, for it defined apartheid as a "process of development which seeks to lead each section of the people in the clearest and quickest way to its own destination under the gracious providence of God". Since this goal cannot be reached as long as the races live together in the same territories, the conference pleaded for a policy of *territorial* apartheid which would mean the conversion of the native areas into true homelands of the Bantu with full opportunity for development and self-government. It was admitted that this policy would entail very great sacrifice on the part of the white population, but it was felt that this price should be paid for the sake of interracial justice and peace. Since the disintegration of Bantu society is "the crucial problem of South Africa today" the purpose must be to save Bantu social life in so far as possible, to develop it and to reconstruct it where it has broken down. This can only be done by remaking the reserves into true homes for the Bantus.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs*[2] Mr. J. W. Patten has described the Bloemfontein Conference as "a formidable challenge". Its conception of territorial separation, which is in some respects similar to proposals which liberal leaders in South Africa have made and which the Indian

[1] Dutch Reformed leaders have however stated that they consider the word apartheid misleading and prefer the expression "development according to each culture (or kind)".

[2] January 1952

delegation made at the second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, would indeed mean a fundamental reorientation of South African society. But the government has reacted negatively to this radical proposal. The Prime Minister stated "that total segregation was impracticable under present conditions in South Africa" and that "it does not pay any party to endeavour to achieve the impossible". There are few men in responsible positions in civil administration or industry who believe that it is still possible to make such a radical change in the economic, social and political structure of the country. The issue for the Dutch Reformed Churches is therefore whether they will hold to their conception of apartheid in spite of these apparently insurmountable obstacles or whether they will seek to find another solution for the racial problems of the nation.

The Churches which collaborate in the Christian Council of South Africa (the larger English-speaking Churches and a number of Mission Churches) reject the apartheid principle. They would replace it by the principle that the franchise should be accorded to all capable of exercising it and they believe that this should take place in a multi-racial society. They have proposed that a national convention, truly representative of all races, be called, for "in matters affecting the daily life of the peoples of all races in the country, joint consultation is the only means of promoting the blessings of peace and harmonious living".

They have again and again protested against various forms of racial discrimination. Thus the Methodist Church of South Africa stated in 1952: "Legislation which differentiates against particular groups purely on grounds of race or colour is essentially wrong." The Synod of the (Anglican) Church of the Province of South Africa declared in 1950 "that discrimination between men on grounds of race alone is inconsistent with the principles of Christ's religion". The Christian Council of South Africa has more than once approached the government with strong pleas to change its policy toward the non-white races. It is however characteristic of the situation in South Africa that no appreciable political or popular support has been found for this position any more than for the policy of total apartheid.

It is noteworthy that the large numbers of Bantu

Christians who are members of the Churches of European origin have not responded to the proposal to form a United Church exclusively composed of Bantus. Their religious leaders, including some who are identified with the movement for the political emancipation of the Bantus, have taken the attitude that it is essential that Christians of different races have as much fellowship as possible with each other and that therefore none of the Christian links which exist today should be broken.

On the other hand there is the phenomenon of the Bantu sects, of which there exist today more than a thousand. These sects, which range from bodies not very different from Christian sects in Western countries to bodies which are more pagan than Christian, owe their success to a large extent to the fact that "the Africans desirous of self-expression and independence found religion the only sphere in which they could organize their people for this purpose without interference".[1] Thus their existence constitutes a grave problem and challenge to the Christian forces in South Africa.

It follows from the above that the Christian situation in South Africa is still very much in flux. All Churches in the country have to face the question of what their next step should be with regard to race relations. Thus in the Dutch Reformed Churches the appearance of the book of Professor Ben Marais[2] in which he analyses the South African situation in the light of developments in the U.S.A. and Brazil and in which he denies that segregation can be justified on Biblical grounds has led to a fruitful discussion. Again, Bantu Christians have to decide what attitude they will take to the movement of passive resistance.

In this discussion Christians of other parts of the world seek to participate. Churches and church councils in several countries have expressed their concern over the South African racial situation. This intervention is often resented by South African Christians, because it frequently happens that opinions are expressed before a serious attempt has been made to get at the facts of the situation. On the other hand the race problem is so obviously a world problem and the repercussions of inter-

[1] B. Sundkler. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa.* London, 1948.
[2] *Colour—Unsolved Problem of the West.* Capetown, 1953.

racial conflict in one area on the racial situation in other areas are so considerable, that these issues become inevitably a central subject of ecumenical discussion between the Churches.

That is why the World Council of Churches has also been concerned with the situation in South Africa and why its Central Committee after receiving a report on the subject from its General Secretary[1] has expressed its convictions on the subject in a resolution which says specifically: "The Central Committee gives encouragement to all those in South Africa and elsewhere who are labouring for a solution of the racial problem in keeping with the Christian Gospel", which reaffirms the principle of non-discrimination, and which calls upon the Churches to engage in the Christian ministry of reconciliation.

THE CHURCHES AND NATIONAL SOCIALIST RACISM

The rise of the National Socialist movement in Germany presented a formidable challenge to the Churches. The most acute issue was what attitude should be taken to the anti-Semitic ideology and to the discriminatory measures based on that theory. Anti-Semitism was of course not invented by the National Socialists. It had existed for a long time and in many countries. But the Churches had not faced its implications. This time they were forced to do so.

From the point of view of the Church, anti-Semitism is not merely and not even in the first place a question of race relations. The specific connexion between the Christian Church and the Jewish people, their common heritage, their agreement in essential convictions and their disagreement in other no less essential points are above all religious and theological matters which transcend the biological and sociological realm. But in the case of National Socialism the Churches confronted a form of anti-Semitism which based itself on the absolutizing of race, and they were therefore forced not only to redefine the Christian attitude to the Jewish people, but

[1] W. A. Visser 't Hooft. *A Visit to the South African Churches.* London and New York, 1952.

also to formulate their convictions concerning the racial problem as a whole.

We find once again that the record of the Churches in this connexion is mixed. Part of the story speaks of failure and compromise, but another part of the story speaks of resistance and clear witness given under circumstances of exceptional danger and sometimes confirmed by courageous suffering for the sake of truth.

During the first stage the main issue was the application of the Aryan paragraph[1] to the Churches. In 1933 the movement of German Christians (which stood for an adaptation of the Church to National Socialism) had, with the help of the National Socialist authorities, seized power in many of the regional Churches. These German Christians succeeded in imposing the Aryan paragraph on these Churches. This led to a strong reaction. Professor Karl Barth issued his call to battle: *Theological Existence Today* in which he said: "The communion of those who belong to the Church is not determined by blood, and therefore not by race either, but by the Holy Spirit and by baptism. If the German Evangelical Church excludes the Jewish Christians or treats them as second-class Christians, it ceases to be a Christian Church."[2]

Several groups of theological professors issued reports on the controversial question. Some of these attempted to find a compromise. But others spoke out unequivocally. Thus the Faculty of Theology of the University of Marburg took a clear stand against any racial discrimination in the life of the Church,[3] and 17 well-known New Testament scholars issued a declaration in which they stated that it belongs to the very nature of the Church to be a Church of all races and nations.[4]

But for the moment the German Christians had the backing of the State and their principle of basing the Church on "race as the creation of God"[5] was imposed on a number of Churches in spite of the rapidly growing resistance which took organized form in the Pastor's

[1] The Aryan paragraph as related to the Churches stated that those who were not of Aryan descent or who were married with a person of non-Aryan descent were not allowed to serve as pastor or official of a church.

[2] *Theologische Existenz Heute*, p. 24.

[3] *Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland und die Judenfrage*, p. 47.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 68.

[5] Hermelink. *Kirche im Kampf*, p. 58.

Emergency League under the leadership of Pastor Martin Niemöller and in the organization of the Confessional Church movement.

In the next stage the main issue at stake was not so much the Aryan paragraph as the attempt to make the Churches the willing instruments of the totalitarian State and the propagation of a pagan racialism offered as the modern alternative to the "outmoded" teachings of Christianity. Thus the Synod of the Confessional Church in the Old Prussian Union was compelled to declare in 1935 that in the new religion blood and race became idols and that this religion was in direct opposition to the first of the ten commandments.[1] But even in this period in which the Church had to fight for its life it was not wholly silent on the Jewish question. In the memorandum which the leaders of the Confessional Church sent to Hitler in May 1936 they said: "When in the framework of the National Socialist ideology anti-Semitism is imposed upon Christians and they are expected to hate the Jews, they must set over against this the commandment to love one's neighbours."[2]

In 1938 the persecution of the Jews reached unprecedented proportions. Synagogues were burned, Jewish shops destroyed, individual Jews attacked and imprisoned. The atmosphere of terror was such that few dared to speak out openly. But the Confessional Church called publicly upon the parishes to render assistance to the Jewish people in their need[3] and spoke a word of support and encouragement to those pastors "who in connexion with the action against the Jews have preached the ten commandments and have therefore been persecuted".[4] But even these terrible events did not lead to a change of mind among the German Christians. In 1939 they published the so-called "Declaration of Godesberg" in which they expressed their opposition to any supranational (and implicitly supra-racial) Church body "as a political degradation of Christianity". But a prompt reply was given. The Confessional Church stated: "To deny the supra-national character of the Church is to

[1] *Evang. Kirche in Deutschland und die Judenfrage,* p. 142.
[2] *Ibidem,* p. 152.
[3] *Ibidem,* p. 163.
[4] *Ibidem,* p. 164.

destroy the unity of the Body of Christ."[1] And the officers of the World Council of Churches (at that time in process of formation) declared: "Recognition of the spiritual unity of all those who are in Christ, irrespective of race, nation or sex belongs to the essence of the Church. The Church is called to give clear and visible expression of this unity. . . . The Church rejoices in maintaining fellowship with those of the Jewish race who have accepted the Gospel."[2]

During the war the possibilities of action of the Confessional Church were severely limited. But there were those who could not be silenced under any circumstances. Thus Bishop Wurm of the Church of Württemberg continued to speak to the conscience of the authorities and of the nation. In various letters to Hitler, to Goebbels and other leaders he protested against the crimes committed in the name of Germany. Thus in January 1943 he referred to "the systematic murder of Jews" in certain occupied countries and added: "To execute people without trial and only because of their belonging to another nationality . . . is in direct opposition to the clear commandment of God."[3] Similarly in July 1943 he pleaded for those non-Aryans who still remained in the country and said concerning the plans to deport and destroy them: "these plans stand in sharp opposition to the commandment of God and to the foundation of all Western thought and life: namely the God-given basic right to life and the dignity of the human person."[4] And in the same year the Confessional Church in the old Prussian Union issued a declaration to be read from the pulpit which contains these words: "Woe to us and to our people . . . if it is considered right to kill men, because they are judged unfit to live for belonging to another race."[5]

In the meantime the Churches in the occupied countries also had to face the issue of racialism. Thus in Norway the "provisional Church government" protested in November 1942 against the new anti-Semitic laws and pleaded with the Quisling government: "Stop the persecution of the Jews and refrain from hatred against Jews

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1 *Evang. Kirsche in Deutschland und die Judenfrage*, p. 176.
2 *International Christian Press Service*, 1939, No. 19.
3 Hermelink. *Kirche im Kampf*, p. 565.
4 *Ibidem*, p. 655.
5 Niesel. *Der Weg der Bekennenden Kirche*. 1947, p. 45.

which is spread by the press in our country."[1] In France a group of Protestant Church leaders issued in 1941 "a solemn protest against every decree which excludes the Jews from human society".[2]

In Holland the battle about anti-Semitism became one of the dominating issues in the prolonged conflict between the Churches and the occupation authorities. When the first regulation concerning the dismissal of Jewish officials was published, the leaders of five Protestant Churches sent an urgent request to the Reichs-Commissioner to abolish the regulation and this action was made public by a declaration read from the pulpits.[3] In January 1942, official delegates of both the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches submitted a memorandum to the Reichs-Commissioner insisting that the deportation of Jews should be stopped.[4] In July 1942 both Churches sent a telegram (later read publicly in several of the churches) to the authorities in which the following sentences appear: "The undersigned Churches have learnt with great horror of the new measures whereby men, women and children as well as whole families are being deported to Germany or countries now subservient to it. The suffering which this brings to tens of thousands, the recognition that these measures offend the deepest moral sense of the Dutch people, the opposition to God's laws of justice and charity, all this forces us to send you the most urgent plea not to implement these measures".[5] Even clearer language was used the next year when all Christian Churches together protested against the sterilization of so-called mixed marriages: "Sterilization means a violation of the divine commandment as well as of human rights. It is the last consequence of an anti-Christian racial doctrine which destroys nations and of a self-exaltation without bounds. . . . The Christian Churches of the Netherlands say to Your Excellency in the name of God and of His Word: It is the duty of Your Excellency to stop this shameful pratice of sterilization."[6]

1 *Norwegische Kirchendokumente.* Zürich, 1943, p. 70.
2 *Die Kirche spricht zur Welt.* Geneva, 1942, p. 70.
3 *The Struggle of the Dutch Church.* New York, 1945, p. 23.
4 *Ibidem,* 1945, p. 44.
5 *Ibidem,* p. 48
6 *Ibidem,* pp. 57-58.

So far we have only spoken of public protests. But were these protests implemented by deeds? The answer is that they were, though by no means as generally as ought to have been the case. Space does not suffice to tell the full story, but some of the main points must be noted. In Germany the work of Pastor Heinrich Grüber and his associates resulted in the emigration of many non-Aryans but led also to the imprisonment of Pastor Grüber himself. When the mass expulsions of Jews to France took place in 1940 the "Cimade" created by the French Christian Youth organizations rendered notable service in the reception camps. Later on the same body succeeded in organizing illegal emigration to Switzerland on a considerable scale. In Holland many Church members took Jewish children into their homes and not a few pastors were arrested and deported because of their attempts to save Jews. The World Council of Churches had its own refugee service from 1939 on and could with the help of the Churches in the U.S.A., Great Britain, Switzerland and Scandinavia co-ordinate and support financially the various attempts to save as many Jewish people as possible. The full story of Christian assistance to the Jews in their hour of great need will never be fully told, for in many cases individuals acted quietly and behind the scenes.

We may conclude this section by pointing out that while many Christians failed in their duty to resist in word and deed the inhuman racialism of National Socialism, there were a not inconsiderable number of Church leaders and simple Church members who rendered a clear witness to the reality of the Christian faith. The Christians who were involved in the struggle know better than anyone how often the Churches and they themselves failed to do what ought to have been done. Thus the Churches in Germany spoke not only for themselves, but for others who had been in a similar situation when after the war they confessed publicly their sense of guilt in this respect. The declaration concerned was made by the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany, the most representative body of the German Churches. It contains the following words: "We confess the Church that is made up of Christians, Jews and Gentiles together in one body and whose peace is Christ Jesus. . . . We freely avow that by negligence and silence

we became accessory before the God of mercy to the crime committed against the Jews by men of our nation. . . . We entreat all Christians to abjure anti-Semitism of every kind, and to offer a firm resistance wherever it again raises its head, and to meet Jews and Jewish Christians in a spirit of brotherhood."[1]

THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL CHURCHES

Space forbids the discussion of the problems of race in all countries. But it is important to remember that the issues of interracial relationship are by no means confined to a few areas only, and we will briefly call attention to the situation in certain other parts of the world.

Asia

Are the Asian Churches also concerned with racial problems? Not in the same way as the Churches of the U.S.A. and South Africa. For the principle that people of all races are to be admitted to their membership is generally admitted and they live in countries in which distinctions between race and colour are not recognized as such. But there are two reasons why even in this brief survey special mention should be made of the Asian Churches.

The first is that these Churches are deeply concerned about the existence of racial conflict in other parts of the world. The very fact that the establishment of these Churches has come about through the services of Western missionaries presupposes the supra-racial character of the Church. With the growth of nationalism and the coming of political independence the place and role of the non-nationals in the life of the Christian communities had to be reconsidered. But, in the discussions concerning the necessary readjustment of the task of the foreign missionary, the basic principle of the supra-national character of the Church was not called into question and often in fact strongly re-affirmed. From the perspective of the Asian Churches the existence of racially conditioned Churches elsewhere in the world is there-

[1] Ecumenical Press Service, 1950, No. 18.

fore an anomaly and a stumbling block. At the same time the fact that nations which are supposed to be Christian practice discrimination on grounds of race weakens the Christian cause. It is therefore natural that, both for the sake of the principle involved and for the sake of their missionary task, Asian Christians feel strongly that Christians all over the world should oppose racial discrimination in all its manifestations.

In the second place, however, it must be emphasized that in many Asian countries there exist problems of relationships between groups of different ethnic origin which are not generally described as racial problems, though they have many elements in common with what other countries call racial problems.

Examples of this are the relationships between Chinese and the indigenous ethnic groups in Indonesia or Thailand; between Chinese and Indians in Malaya; between Singhalese and Tamil in Ceylon; between Koreans and Japanese in Japan; between Karens and other ethnic groups in Burma. In most of these cases special ethnic Christian communities have arisen. The existence of these communities is generally justified on grounds of language and not on grounds of race. But it is inevitable that their separate existence should lead to the development or at least the maintenance of a special ethnic or racial consciousness. Here again however the development of the ecumenical movement has helped to counteract divisive tendencies. Through co-operation in common synods, in national Christian councils and in the world-wide ecumenical bodies, the various groups are brought into vital contact with each other. Again, there are many local congregations in which Christians of differing racial or ethnic background worship together. In certain situations where there has been great tension between various ethnic groups, the specific Christian bond has proved stronger than the divisive political forces, so that Christians have been able to act as a reconciling force. As a Burmese Christian puts it: The supra-racial character of the Church is learnt through bitter lessons and often at the price of deep personal experience on the part of the members of the Churches in Asia."

Central and East Africa

It is not possible to deal with all parts of Africa, but in view of recent developments reference must be made to two factors in the situation in Central and East Africa which illustrate the role which the Churches are playing. In this area the background of racial conflict is the problem of social disintegration. Writing about the deeper causes of the Mau Mau situation in Kenya, Margery Perham[1] says that the key to the problem lies in the psychological sphere, in the mental effects of the disintegration caused by European contact. She adds that the system of migrant labour, so long regarded as Africa's great convenience, may come to be seen as its curse. One of the few forces counteracting that disintegration is the Christian mission. When they were put under strong pressure to participate in violent terrorism, many Kikuyu Christians have stood firm and paid with their lives. But, as Margery Perham points out, this does not mean that African Christians accept uncritically the policies of the white rulers of their countries. On the contrary there is in this whole area today a *crise de confiance* in the purposes of the Europeans and this crisis affects African Christians as much as any other group.

The missionary bodies are very much aware of these deep currents, and they have therefore raised a warning voice which has been echoed by the Churches in Great Britain. One of the acute issues is that of Central Africa Federation (the federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland). For the large majority of the Africans involved, as well as the missionaries and their Churches at home, believe that the present scheme does not contain sufficient safeguards against a permanent subordination of the rights and interests of the Africans to those of the European settlers. Thus a number of British Churches and missionary societies as well as the British Council of Churches have issued statements in which they urge that the scheme should not be adopted until guarantees have been incorporated into it for increasing African participation in political life. In a letter to *The*

[1] *The Times*, 23 April 1953.

Times[1] the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland and the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council said: "The confidence of Africans must be secured if federation is to work out successfully. . . . There seems to us therefore to be an urgent need, before federation is inaugurated, for imaginative action promoted by trust and understanding, to demonstrate to Africans that the intention behind the federal scheme is to provide the necessary political and economic framework within which all races can progress in effective co-operation. Nothing could so effectively demonstrate this intention as the removal of some discriminatory legislation and some day-to-day practices which destroy racial harmony. . . ." Similarly the Bishop of Chichester, speaking in the House of Lords on 1 April 1953, criticized the omission from the scheme of any clear statement of what the Federal Assembly intends or is expected to intend for the advancement of the Africans. The Bishop urged that a round-table conference in which all interests should be represented be called for the purpose of arriving at an agreement which would lead to real partnership between the races.

Other Parts of the World

The solution of the race problem does not only depend on the attitude of Churches in countries where different races live side by side, but also on the attitude of Churches in countries which are uniracial in composition. Experiences in connexion with international conferences show that race prejudice exists even among people who have no specific racial problems in their own land. Again, the impact of anti-Semitic racialist propaganda on countries which had so far been free from racial complexes, has shown how easily racial feeling can be aroused and how important it is that the Churches everywhere should take a clear stand on this subject.

In this connexion reference should be made to present intercontinental relationships. There is a widespread feeling in Asia and Africa that in spite of the gradual disappearance of colonial imperialism, the attitudes of Europeans and Americans to Asia and Africa are still

[1] 4 March 1953.

characterized by a superiority complex rather than by respect for other cultures and a sense of solidarity. It is generally believed that this is largely due to conscious or unconscious racial prejudice. Now the Churches have learned through their missionary relationships that there is no justification whatsoever for such superior attitudes. For the younger Churches have often put the older Churches to shame in their consecration to the Christian cause. Again, the ecumenical movement has greatly helped in demonstrating that all continents and races contribute leadership for the common life of the Churches. Such men as Bishop Azariah of India, Aggrey of Africa, Kagawa of Japan and a host of younger Christian leaders have dispelled the notion that the intercontinental traffic is a one-way traffic only. But much remains to be done to overcome the dangerous notion that intercontinental racial tension—or even in the long run an intercontinental race-war—is unavoidable. Now that Christianity has become in fact a world religion, the Churches should grasp the opportunity to awaken in their members the sense of fellowship with and responsibility towards men of all races and continents, and help the statesmen to develop policies of intercontinental assistance and solidarity. The campaigns carried on by a number of Western Churches for large-scale assistance to Eastern countries in times of war or famine are a real contribution to interracial understanding.

In this connexion there is a special challenge to the Churches in countries which close their borders altogether to emigrants from non-white races. For it is clear that this form of discrimination creates the same kind of resentment as discrimination within a nation of multiracial composition. The Churches of the U.S.A. have more than once protested against "humiliating race discrimination" in immigration policies,[1] and the Churches of Australia have done the same.[2] It is not suggested that the problems of overpopulation and migration can be settled by a simple formula, but with a certain amount of imagination these problems can be handled in such a way that the impression of action inspired by racial prejudice is avoided. The Churches as part of a supra-

1. MacFarland. *Christian Unity in the Making*, New York, 1948, p. 193.
2. *The Student World*, Fourth Quarter 1951, p. 336.

racial fellowship have the opportunity to foster that imaginative attitude.

THE VOICE OF THE ECUMENICAL CONFERENCES

The first of the series of world conferences of a comprehensive ecumenical character was the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. At that time the Churches created by the missionary activity of Western Churches were very largely controlled by Western leadership and there were only 17 Asian and no African delegates.[1] The subject of race relations was not specifically discussed.

The first world war forced the question of race relations upon the attention of the Churches. At the Stockholm Conference on Life and Work in 1925 the subject was taken up, but in view of the weakness of the non-Western delegations the matter did not receive adequate attention. The first thorough treatment of the subject in its world-wide context took place in 1928 at the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council. The meeting was thoroughly interracial in composition. The discussion on race was introduced by Dr. John Hope, president of the well-known Negro college at Atlanta, Georgia, and Bishop Uzaki of Japan was the chairman of the special section on the subject. The conference adopted a full statement which represents the first clear utterance of an ecumenical conference on racial relationships.[2] "Any discrimination against human beings on the ground of race or colour, any selfish exploitation and any oppression of man by man, is a denial of the teaching of Jesus." It analysed the various types of interracial problems, defined the specific steps which should be taken in each case and stated that "in lands where different races live side by side, full participation in social, cultural, and above all, religious interracial fellowship, and the development of personal friendship which such intercourse engenders, are the natural expression of our common Christianity". Its conclusion was that "the mis-

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[1] W. R. Hogg. *Ecumenical Foundations*, p. 396.
[2] See Volume IV in *Reports of the Meeting of the I.M.C. in Jerusalem, 1928*. The volume also contains important preliminary papers.

sionary enterprise itself, as an instrument of God for bringing into being among all races the Church of Christ, has in its power to be the most creative force working for world-wide interracial unity".

This lead given by the missionary movement was followed up by the Second Conference of the Life and Work movement which met in 1937 in Oxford. That meeting, which brought together representative leaders from 128 Churches and 44 countries, had to meet the challenge of the new totalitarian and racial doctrines which dominated the scene in the 1930's and it therefore gave very full attention to the race question. The substantial report of the section on "Church and Community" under the chairmanship of Sir Walter Moberly contains a chapter on the race problem which is the strongest and most specific utterance on the subject that has ever been made by an ecumenical conference.[1] The report takes a clear stand against the new racialism: "The assumption by any race or nation of supreme blood or destiny must be emphatically denied by Christians as without foundation in fact and wholly alien to the heart of the Gospel." But it is realized that the problem is world-wide and that the Western "Christian" nations are especially responsible for the present dangerous position. "The most acute situations today are largely due to movements of population initiated by white and so-called "Christian" nations for their own advantage. Individual Christians and their Churches bear a heavy guilt." Specific principles are indicated, such as: "the necessity of such economic and social change as shall open the way to full opportunity for persons of all races". But it is strongly emphasized that the Church must begin by putting its own house in order: "In its services of public worship, in its more informal fellowship, and in its organization, there can be no place or any pretext whatever for exclusion or compulsory segregation because of race and colour. . . . The congregation or communion which allows its line of action to be determined by such racial discrimination denies the Gospel whose proclamation is its task and commission." And the Message from the Conference to the Christian Churches which was drafted by Arch-

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task.* London, Allen and Urwin, 1937, pp. 230-35.

bishop William Temple summarized the task of the Churches with regard to race in three short sentences: "The Christian sees distinctions of race as part of God's purpose to enrich mankind with a diversity of gifts. Against racial pride or race antagonism the Church must set its face implacably as rebellion against God. Especially in its own life and worship there can be no place for barriers because of race or colour."

This attack against prejudices inside and outside the Churches bore fruit. It can be shown that in the years following the Oxford Conference many Churches gave serious consideration to their own specific responsibility in this field.

At the Tambaram (Madras) Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1938 in which the number of delegates from the East was roughly equal to that of the West, the issues of interracial relations came up in several of the sections.[1] In discussing the Church and the Social Order the conference said: "We would make the unit of co-operation the human race. We cannot stop within the unit of class or State or race or ecclesiasticism and say: Thus far and no further will our co-operation extend." And in discussing the Church and the International Order it was stated: "God has made all peoples of one blood. No race can therefore disregard the rights and interests of other races. Racial persecution is particularly abhorrent. The Church should exert its influence on the side of all movements working for the full and equal sharing by all races in the common life of mankind. In doing this the Church must purge its own life of any racial discrimination."

The first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, in which 147 Churches from 44 countries representing many different races took part, called the existence of Churches segregated by race and colour "a scandal within the Body of Christ".[2] It admitted that the Church "has reflected and then by its example sanctified the racial prejudice that is rampant in the world". These practices contradict all that the Church believes about God's love for all His children. They must

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1 *The World Mission of the Church*. London, 1939, pp. 55, 128, 130, 138, 142.

2 *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. Harper, New York, pp. 56, 81, 94.

be eliminated from the Christian community. Moreover "with all the resources at their disposal" the Churches "should oppose enforced segregation on ground of race or colour, working for the progressive recognition and application of this principle in every country".

In the following years the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches continued to be concerned with the racial situation and particularly with the developments in South Africa. Its intention to send an ecumenical delegation representing several races to South Africa for conference with the Churches in that country could not be carried out. But the General Secretary of the Council paid a visit to South Africa in 1952. His report was submitted to the Central Committee meeting at Lucknow, India, in January 1953. In its resolution adopted after discussion of this report the Central Committee said: "The Central Committee gives encouragement to all those in South Africa and elsewhere who are labouring for a solution of the racial problem in keeping with the Christian Gospel, and calls upon all Christians to uphold them in thought, prayer and acts of reconciliation. The Central Committee would use this opportunity to express its strong conviction that the first and foremost contribution which the Churches everywhere can and must make to the solution of the race problem is to manifest in their own life that in Christ all racial division is overcome and that any policy of enforced segregation in any aspects of Church life is incompatible with the very nature of the Church of Christ. The Central Committee, holding strongly the convictions expressed by the First Assembly, affirms that all political, social, economic discriminations based on the grounds of race, wherever they may exist, are contrary to the Will of God as expressed in the Christian Gospel. Recognizing that existing racial discriminations are increasing tension and bitterness in various parts of the world, the Committee calls upon the member Churches to engage in the Christian ministry of reconciliation and to do all in their power to end such discrimination wherever it exists."

The World's Alliance of YMCA's, the World's YWCA and the World's Student Christian Federation have also taken a definite stand on the subject. The following words from a resolution of the YMCA adopted in 1937 and confirmed in 1950 are representative: "This World's

Conference records its belief that discriminations based on race and colour are contrary to the Will of God; (and) holds that no association or branch should adopt a racially exclusive membership policy, or close any of its activities to any man on the ground of his race or colour."[1]

The main confessional bodies have also expressed their convictions on race relationship. The Lutheran World Federation stated in 1947: "Men of every race, language, and nationality are one in nature and of equal worth in the sight of God. Christ died for all men. No group is inherently superior or inferior to any other. The existence of recognized inequalities gives added responsibility, not added privilege, to those who are in favoured positions."[2]

And the Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican communion assembled at Lambeth in 1948 declared: "We call upon all Christians everywhere to recognize their brotherhood in Christ as being stronger to unite than are race and colour to divide. . . . The doctrine of the Church as expressed in the New Testament implies that any member of the Church should be certain of a cordial welcome at any service in any house of God throughout the world."[3]

It may well be asked whether these unequivocal statements have been implemented by equally unequivocal deeds. The answer must be that these challenges have certainly helped in creating that "bad conscience" in many Churches which has led them to face their own shortcomings in the matter of race. At the same time these principles have provided a basis for the work of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, which in the name of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council has sought to promote the acceptance of a general standard of human rights, including non-discrimination. It remains however true that there is a serious gap between what the Churches know to be right and true and what they actually do in situations of conflict or social pressure.

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1 *Forward Together*. Report of the Meeting of the World's Committee of the YMCA, 1950, p. 27.
2 *Proceedings of the L.W.F.* Lund, Sweden, 1947, p. 88.
3 *Lambeth Conference, 1948*. Part II, p. 33.

It should be added that the most important service which the ecumenical movement has rendered with regard to race relations is not in what has been said on the subject, but in the fact that in its own life the problem is no longer a problem. The large ecumenical conferences and the innumerable smaller ecumenical meetings in which Christians of different races have learned to live, to worship, to discuss together on a footing of complete equality have made Christians realize that this truly human relationship is the normal one and that segregation is fundamentally abnormal. The real significance of the ecumenical movement for the solution of the race problem lies in this re-discovery of unrestricted fellowship on the basis of a common loyalty which transcends all human barriers.

PART TWO

THE ISSUES

THE SUPRA-RACIAL CHURCH

Our short survey of the attitude of the Churches with regard to race has shown that there is a growing consensus in their teaching on this subject. We must now define more clearly just what the nature and contents of this consensus are.

The starting point is the understanding which the Church has of its own nature. For the Church has no specific contribution to make to the solution of problems of interracial relations unless it is a body *sui generis* which has its own conception of the right relations between men. In other words the Church is ineffective in dealing with the racial issue when it forgets its own charter and adapts itself to its environment. The Church becomes effective in overcoming racial tension only when it realizes again its unique mission in the world.

It is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the theological situation today that, in the realms both of biblical scholarship and of systematic theology, the conception of the Church is again understood as a central category of the Christian faith and that, in spite of considerable divergence on other points, there is substantial agreement on certain central aspects of the original and fundamental conception of the Church in the New Testament.

This agreement can be formulated as follows: "The Church is the people of God, gathered together by Jesus Christ, so as to represent the new humanity." The Church is the people *of God*. It is not a man-made institution. It has been created by an act of God. It belongs to Him and to Jesus Christ who died in order "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John xi.52). Men therefore cannot do in and with the Church what they may want to. They dare not treat the Church as an association in and for which they can

draw up whatever rules and regulations they like. The basic constitution of the Church is given. It may be difficult to arrive at an agreement as to just what elements of faith and order belong to that given constitution, but there can be little doubt that this Church is intended to serve all humanity and that it cannot possibly become the monopoly of one race or nation. Where the Church is planted in a specific race or nation it is not in the first place the task of the Church to adapt itself to the life of that race or nation, but rather the task of that race or nation to adapt its life to the demands which arise from the very nature of the Church.

This Church is called a *people*. That is not meant as a mere hyperbole. It indicates that the followers of Jesus Christ are not unrelated individuals, but that they form a coherent whole held together by ties no less close than those of nationality. The early Christians were called by their critics a *tertium genus*, a third race, and they accepted this title as a true description of their fellowship, for they had indeed a common history and a common loyalty which distinguished them from other human groupings.

This people is a *new* people. It is new in that it belongs to the new age which has been inaugurated by the coming of Jesus Christ. It is also new in that it is characterised by new relationships among men. In the life of the old (Jewish) people, nationality and faith had coincided, with the result that deeper fraternal bonds could only exist among members of the Jewish nation. Only by being incorporated into that nation could others join in that deeper fellowship. The new people, however, is to demonstrate the true universality of God's concern for men. Within the new fellowship all racial barriers have fallen. To put on "the new nature" is to live in a community in which there "cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcized and uncircumcized, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all in all" (Colossians III. 10, cf. Galatians III. 28).

Should this new supra-racial and supra-national fellowship be understood as a purely "spiritual" phenomenon which need not necessarily express itself in concrete and visible form? No, it is quite clear that the new people are to manifest this new relationship between men of differing race and nation in their common life

in the Church. In fact the local Churches founded by St. Paul consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Christians who had unrestricted fellowship with each other. This did not happen without much searching of heart. For many Jewish Christian leaders it seemed sheer revolution to accept the heathen in full fellowship without incorporating them into the Jewish nation. The crisis at Antioch (Acts xv., Galatians ii.) led to the victory of the principle defended by St. Paul, namely that national or racial background was to create no division in the Christian Church. Thus "the last barrier had fallen".[1]

This basic principle of the supra-racial character of the Christian Church belongs then to its very nature. Where it is obscured the nature of the Church itself is obscured. Where it is manifested the true meaning of the Church as the new people of God is revealed.

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF RACE

With regard to the conception of race there exists also a growing consensus among Christian thinkers. The Churches have always believed in the fundamental unity of mankind. When the scientists called together by Unesco declare "*que tous les hommes actuels appartiennent à une même espèce, dite Homo Sapiens, et qu'ils sont issus d'une même souche*" (statement of September 1952), those who know their New Testament are reminded of the words spoken by St. Paul 19 centuries ago: "He made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts xvii. 26). But it cannot be denied that at various periods in the history of the Christian Churches the strength of this basic conviction has been greatly weakened by the acceptance of ideologies or theories which established a hierarchy among the races. Thus the attitude of the Church to the Jewish people, which had in the early centuries of the Christian era been wholly based on religious and theological considerations, became from the days of Constantine the Great and especially in the Middle Ages a strange combination of justifiable theological and most un-Christian anti-Semitic motives.[2] The

[1] Harnack. *Mission und Ausbreitung*. Leipzig, 1915, p. 63.
[2] The transition has been clearly described by Oepke: *Das neue Gottesvolk*. Gütersloh, 1950. See pp. 287, 295, 298.

result was, as the laws of the period make clear, that the Jewish people were considered as a lower order of human beings. Again, when the Western nations came in direct contact with the African peoples and began to exercise control over them, certain theologians sought to justify this domination by reference to Noah's cursing of the son of Ham, who was to be "a servant of servants to his brethren" (Genesis IX. 25). More recently we have had the sad phenomenon of a movement which sought to combine Christianity with National Socialist racialism. Fortunately we can say that these aberrations have not remained unchallenged and that today it is difficult to find a serious theologian or responsible Church leader who would defend such shaky theological constructions thought out "*pour le besoin de la (mauvaise) cause*". The declaration of the representative ecumenical conference at Oxford in 1937 reflects the general consensus of opinion: "There is no room for any differentiation between the races as to their intrinsic value. All share alike in the concern of God, being created by Him to bring their unique and distinctive contributions to His service in the world."[1]

It should however be made clear that the Christian conception of race has its own distinctive characteristics in that it is God-centred rather than man-centred. The statement of St. Paul quoted above begins with the words: "He (God) made from one". In these words lies the difference between a vague cosmopolitanism which considers race and nations as purely accidental and the Christian conception which accepts them as part of the structure of human life which is a gift of God. The Christian Church does not stand for any form of racialism. "Against racial pride and race-antagonism the Church must set its face implacably as rebellion against God."[2] But that does not mean that it stands for an abstract interracialism.

In so far as race is a purely biological concept there is no reason to attach spiritual significance to it. The colour of the skin is irrelevant from the standpoint of Christian values. But in the course of history the main units which we call "races" have become the bearers of specific

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1 *The Churches Survey Their Task.* London, 1937, p. 72.
2 *Idem*, p. 58.

historical experiences and worked out particular forms of culture. It is useful that modern science tells us that these so-called races are by no means self-contained and unchanging entities, for that helps us to avoid the danger of absolutizing the distinctive cultural characteristics of any race. Nevertheless these characteristics exist and to neglect or deny them for the sake of a general uniformity is just as wrong as it is to deny individuals the right to the specific realization of their own gifts or talents. In this sense it is true that, as the Oxford Conference of 1937 put it: "Each of the races of mankind has been blessed by God with distinctive and unique gifts", and that: "The Christian sees distinctions of race as part of God's purpose to enrich mankind with a diversity of gifts." The recognition of these different gifts does not mean a differentiation between the races as to their intrinsic value.

The situation is not static. New situations may arise—as they have arisen in the past and exist today in some parts of the world—in which the contributions of several races are brought together in a new synthesis. These are to be welcomed and respected as contributions to the common life of humanity. The great African leader, Dr. Aggrey, loved to tell the parable of the white and black keys of the piano which together produce harmonious music. That parable is true if it is not understood in terms of colour, but in terms of function. Racial differences are real, but they are relative because they are related to the calling of mankind as a whole. The last word about men is that they belong together to that one human race which was created by God and which He desires to save.

RACE RELATIONS IN SOCIETY

What are the consequences which these convictions should have in society?

It is not difficult to see what this means for Christians in their personal relationships with men and women of other races. A spiritual attitude which does not affect the realities of human life has nothing to do with the faith in Christ, the Word made flesh.

When St. Paul writes to Philemon concerning the run-

away slave Onesimus he asks Philemon to take him back "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" and he adds: "both in the flesh and in the Lord". That is to say: not only as a brother in a spiritual sense, but at the same time as a brother in the everyday relationships of human life. This was indeed the great role which the Church played in its early days and has continued to play since whenever it has been true to its real nature; it has transformed personal relationships between men who belonged to different social, national or racial groupings. And this not merely within the Christian community—for once every man of every race is seen as a potential member of that community and as one called to serve the same Lord, the neighbour of another race is no longer a mere stranger but a human being for whom the Christian bears responsibility. There can be no doubt that this personal approach to the problem of inter-group contacts has had a deep influence on the total interracial situation. It has built bridges across the gulf of racial hatred, it has taken some of the bitterness out of the humiliation of one race by another, it has made exploitation less intolerable.

But the personal approach is not enough. In fact, as the Oxford Conference of the Churches in 1937 stated: "Undue emphasis upon the higher possibilities of love in personal relations, within the limits of a given system of justice or an established social structure, may tempt Christians to allow individual acts of charity to become a screen for injustice and a substitute for justice."[1] The problem of the relationship between the races is by no means confined to the realm of personal associations. It is especially a problem of the social order which must be dealt with at the institutional, social, economic, political level. In a society in which the Churches have an opportunity to influence the shaping of social standards and in which their members share in responsibility for the working out of the total fabric of the life of the community, they can therefore not confine themselves to the mere proclamation of individual moral principles. They must direct the searching light of the Christian message upon evil practices which have become embedded in the institutions and laws of the nations.

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[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task.* London, 1937, p. 95.

It has taken the Churches a long time to rediscover this "prophetic" task. Even today they are by no means consistently accomplishing it. But they have at least begun. They raise their voice against racial discrimination and racial injustice. In doing so they take their stand on the rights of men. That does not mean that they isolate these rights from man's duties. The Amsterdam Assembly said: "Man's freedom has its counterpart in man's responsibility."[1] But it does mean that there exist certain essential human rights which belong to man "by virtue of his creation, redemption and calling".[2] Some Churches would emphasize that these rights are especially derived from man's status as a creature of God. Others would emphasize that in Christ we have "the assurance that victory of righteousness will have the last word concerning all the injustices of earth" and that we are therefore "spurred on to the quest of a greater measure of righteousness in the social and political sphere, and to fight against every unjust discrimination of class and race and every denial of human rights, whether political or economic".[3] Yet all agree that these rights are God-given rather than man-made. "It is presumptuous for the State to assume that it can grant or deny fundamental rights. It is for the State to embody these rights in its own legal system and to ensure their observance in practice."[4]

What are these rights? With regard to race, the chief one is surely the right to equal opportunity for education and development. For men are entitled to look forward to a time when they may use their latent gifts and make their full contribution to the life of mankind. Nothing is more deeply frustrating than a closed future. Closely related is the right to participate responsibly in the life of the community as one's ability to do so has been proved. The Dutch Reformed Church Congress at Bloemfontein (South Africa) said rightly: "It must be remembered that no people in the world worth their salt will be content indefinitely with no say, or only an

[1] *Report of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches.* London, 1949, p. 93.
[2] *Ibidem,* p. 97.
[3] "Report of Advisory Commission." *The Ecumenical Review,* October 1952, p. 96.
[4] *Report of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches* London, 1949, p. 93.

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indirect say, in the political and socio-economic organization of the country in which decisions are taken about their interests and future."[1] It is a fundamentally sound factor in the present world situation that the existence of this right is increasingly realized.

We cannot enumerate all the rights which are relevant to the racial situation, but one further right must be mentioned—the right to be treated as a person rather than as a member of a biological unit. Implied in this is the right to associate freely with other men and women. To be discriminated against on the mere ground of colour, to become the victim of enforced segregation, is to be dealt with on a sub-human level. The Church of Christ which understands itself as a community of persons each of which has his own specific value *sub specie eternitatis*, and as a supra-racial fellowship must by its very nature react where these rights are violated.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

The problem arises as to why the convictions which we have sought to formulate and which are held not merely by an *élite* of Christian thinkers but by large numbers of Church members, are so imperfectly carried over into practice. For there remains an obvious discrepancy between the claim that the Church is supra-racial and the actual separation between the races in the Churches of several countries. A similar discrepancy can often be found between the pronouncements of the Churches concerning interracial co-operation and the actual attitudes of their members in society. Does this not mean that the social patterns of the environment in which the Churches live (sometimes even the social patterns of yesterday) are more powerful than the convictions which they teach? Are the Churches in the last resort wholly or largely the product of their environment? Or (to use the terminology of Karl Marx) do they represent only "the spiritual aroma" of a society which has not found a truly human solution for its problems of human relationships?

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[1] *Die Naturellenvraagstuk*. Report of Church Congress, Bloemfontein, 1950, p. 120.

The answer to these questions is implied in the earlier part of this brochure. History as well as present experience prove that the Churches are social institutions whose life is largely determined by the general habits, convictions or prejudices of the nations in which they are planted. We must even go farther and admit that, in view of the all-too-human tendency to confuse a merely social tradition with a sacred religious tradition, they are often slower than other social institutions to respond to changing social patterns. But that is by no means the full truth about the Churches. Within these often conservative institutions there operates another force which Christians believe to be the Holy Spirit and which others may explain as a re-emergence of the basic and original Christian convictions. When this force of renewal takes hold of the Church the entangling alliance between the Church and the society around it is broken, the Church re-affirms its freedom to follow its own inner laws and manifests its own distinctive characteristics. Thus the Churches may at certain times of their history represent a retarding element in the process of solving problems of human relationships and at other times they may be the pioneers which point toward new and constructive solutions. Thus Church history records both compromise with slavery and energetic opposition to it. Sometimes these two contrasting aspects of the influence of the Churches may be seen in one single life as in the case of John Newton, the great hymn-writer and a deeply religious man, who was at one time engaged in the slave-traffic, came to recognize that this traffic was totally incompatible with Christianity, became a courageous prophet against slavery in any form and encouraged Wilberforce to undertake his life-task.

It should not however be thought that this process of the disentanglement of the Church answers all problems. For the Churches may go so far in their struggle for liberation from the surrounding society that they give up all possibility of influencing that society. "There is a permanent dilemma confronting the Christian Church because *involvement* is the other side of *responsibility*. Either the Church will go out and win the nations and attempt to influence the institutions of society or it will seek to remain a very select body of committed

Christians."[1] In other words Churches which accept their responsibility towards the total life of the community in which they live cannot disregard the existing mores of that community. Their task is neither to conform to the existing patterns nor to withdraw into the isolation of a spiritual *élite*. On the one hand they must act as the conscience of society by maintaining constantly the tension between the fundamental Christian convictions and social realities. This implies the task of self-criticism in the light of its fundamental purpose and of criticism of society in the light of the New Testament message concerning human relationship. On the other hand they have a pastoral responsibility to their members and must not move so rapidly that they find themselves completely cut off from the main body of the army.

But that cannot mean that the Church is ever justified in adapting itself to its environment in such a way that its own nature and mission is obscured. There is and can be no defence of a refusal of Christian fellowship to fellow-Christians on racial grounds. At this point the question is not whether the Church approximates to its ideal, but whether it simply obeys the marching orders which it has received.

ETHNIC CHURCHES?

The most difficult practical problem which the Churches have to face in this realm is whether the organization of separate ethnic Churches or at least of special Church services for ethnic groups is to be advocated, to be allowed or to be resisted. We choose the term "ethnic Church" rather than "racial Church", because it is more inclusive and because the separation of the racial groups in the life of the Churches is generally justified on ethnic rather than on racial grounds. In other words the argument advanced for the existence of separate services or separate Church organizations for different races is in many cases not a purely racial argument, but includes other factors of a cultural or social nature.

Let us hear the arguments on both sides of the ques-

[1] John C. Bennett. *The Church and the Disorder of Society*. London, 1948. p. 92.

tion. The most obvious reason given for the existence of separate ethnic Churches is the linguistic one. It is maintained that each people should hear the Christian message proclaimed in its own language. Thus in many parts of the world Churches have grown up which had originally no other purpose but to bring the Christian Gospel to a specific people in their own tongue. But language is not an isolated phenomenon. It hangs together with culture and national tradition. So it happens frequently that language-Churches become ethnic Churches in a wider sense. That is why such Churches often continue to exist as separate bodies when the linguistic justifications have disappeared. Examples of this are certain Chinese Churches in Indonesia which now use the Indonesian language or certain Churches in the U.S.A. which at first used German, Swedish, Dutch, etc., but which do not merge with other Churches when English becomes their normal language of preaching and worship.

Thus the question arises whether the maintenance of specific national cultural traditions is an adequate reason for separate Church organization. To this the answer is given that each ethnic (and some would add each racial) group should express its faith through its own cultural forms and that only in this way can it make its full contribution to the varied life of the whole Christian Church. In fact it is this cultural argument which is most often advanced today. For some defenders of ethnic Churches this is merely a matter of practical adjustment, but there are others who undergird their position with a full-fledged theology of nation and race. These latter maintain that "God willed separate races and nations, each with a different language, culture, etc., and therefore racial separation (even within the Christian Church) which will keep the races intact, is not only permissible, but a Christian duty."[1] It is clear that those who hold this theology—which has close affinity to the theology against which the Confessional Church in Germany had to take its stand in the struggle of the 1930's—arrive at the conclusion that ethnic Churches

1 The quotation is from a South African Dutch Reformed statement, but should not be taken as representative of all Dutch Reformed theology in that country, since other theologians deny that segregation is a matter of principle.

are not only permissible, but that they constitute the true standard of Church life and that inter-ethnic or interracial Churches are not only undesirable, but unbiblical.

These are not however the only arguments advanced for the maintenance of separate ethnic Churches or congregations. There are other strictly practical or even opportunistic reasons. These operate especially in the situations where the social environment makes all close interracial contact difficult or nearly impossible. On the part of the white Church the argument is then, that, while interracial fellowship in the Church is certainly the ultimate ideal, such fellowship would in the present circumstances lead to general social fellowship (including intermarriage) and that this would create an open conflict between the Churches and the society in which they live. It is added that only by a very gradual change in the general climate of public opinion will the door gradually be opened to the creation of interracial Churches.

On the part of the Negro Churches the arguments are partly the same and partly different. They strongly emphasize that the existence of separate racial Churches is basically wrong, but a large number of their leaders and members feel nevertheless that in the present state of things the maintenance of Negro Churches is necessary because mixed Churches would not give Negro leaders an adequate share in the leadership of the Churches and that, as long as white Christians reflect so largely the attitudes of the society in which they live, Negroes will not be made to feel truly welcome.[1]

Those who take their stand *against* ethnic Churches emphasize first of all the supra-national and supra-racial nature of the Christian Church. The fellowship created by common faith in our Lord is not to be a mere invisible relationship, a kind of Platonic ideal. It is to be demonstrated and to become incarnate in a new relationship between men and women of different races and nations. There is no Biblical evidence for the emphasis on nations and races as permanent or ultimate values. The Bible does not point backward to unchanging

[1] See the answers to Culver's questionnaire in Marais: *Colour, Unsolved Problem of the West*. Capetown, 1953, p. 185.

national, racial or cultural patterns, but forward to the Kingdom of God in which nation and race will not operate as principles of division, and it is the mission of the Church to give men a foretaste of that Kingdom. Under certain conditions ethnic Churches may be justified for purely practical reasons, but these must under no circumstances be held to be the true pattern of the Church, for they are abnormal rather than normal. We should moreover guard against the danger of creating anachronistic Churches, that is Churches which seek to keep a language or culture alive in an artificial manner when the situation really demands the adoption of a more widely used language and the integration of a cultural minority group into a wider cultural context. In any case the linguistic or cultural argument must never be used as a pretext for a purely racial form of segregation. In the racial field the Churches are not to follow the slow pace of society, but to set the example for what human relationships are meant to be. The Churches must therefore resolutely face the implications of their own message and mission, even if this involves a conflict with the mores of their environment.

It can be said that in this matter also a general consensus is lowly emerging. The lessons learned from the experience of the Churches in the time of the domination of National Socialist racialism and in the period of aggressive nationalism in Asia have greatly contributed to a more sober estimation of the national and cultural factors in Church life. The growth of the ecumenical idea has had a similar influence. The main points on which there is very wide, though not universal, agreement are the following:

1. The existence of separate ethnic Churches cannot be defended on grounds of theological principle. Their existence can under certain circumstances be justified for practical pastoral reasons.
2. The formation of special ethnic Churches must never be considered as more than a very provisional solution of the problem of nation and race in the Christian Church. The clear purpose must always be to arrive as soon as possible at the creation of supra-ethnic, supra-racial churches. In this matter the sociological pattern of the environment is in no sense a decisive argument against advance along this line,

for the mission of the Church is to point the way towards unrestricted fellowship between men and women of all nations and races.

3. *Enforced* segregation, the refusal to admit persons in a Christian Church merely on the ground of race, cannot be justified in any way.
4. Where separate ethnic (racial) Churches exist there rests with these Churches a very special responsibility to demonstrate in various ways that they are in a real sense members of one and the same body.
5. This concern for the expression of supra-racial Christian unity must find expression not only at the level of national synods or councils but must be particularly made manifest in regular contacts between different *local* congregations and their members.
6. The final purpose must remain to create Churches and local congregations which manifest the unity of men of all races and peoples in their common relation to one and the same Lord.

THE FUTURE TASK

Will the Churches help or hinder in the task of eradicating race prejudice and creating truly human relationships between the races? In the light of our survey the answer must be that the Churches will be a hindrance in so far as they adapt themselves to the patterns of their environment or even remain attached to patterns of the past; but that they will help in so far as they realize their specific and genuine mission in the world as the *new* people of God.

When the Churches are conscious of their great mission they have opportunities for dealing with the race problem that no other institution has. That may seem to be an exorbitant claim. But it must be maintained. For prejudice and antagonism can only be overcome by a force which strikes even deeper roots and links men together in genuine fellowship. The optimism of Charles Darwin[1] who maintained in 1875 that as social horizons were widened, *simple common sense* would make man see that he should live in relationships of goodwill with

[1] See quotation in the Unesco Statement of July 1950.

all his fellow-men, has not exactly been confirmed by the events of the last 75 years. Nor dare we hope that a scientific approach to the race problem will by itself bring decisive results. In order to combat prejudices which have entered so deeply into the structure of society and into the attitudes of men, knowledge and reason are not enough. They can render great help by exposing the rationalizations of prejudices, and supply much-needed ammunition in the battle for racial understanding, but they cannot supply the dynamism required to replace prejudice by a positive attitude towards those of a different race. As Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out, racial prejudice is a form of irrationality nourished by deep human impulses: "Racial prejudice is an inevitable concomitant of racial pride; and racial pride is an inevitable concomitant of the ethnic will to live. . . . There are spiritual elements in every human survival impulse; and the corruption of these elements is pride and the will-to-power."[1] In other words racial prejudice is not just a form of ignorance which can be progressively dispelled by enlightenment or by the proclamation of the ideal of racial understanding. Pride can only be overcome by a force which makes for humility. An egocentric will-to-power can only be counteracted by a deep sense of responsibility for and kinship with those who are in danger of becoming the victims of that attitude.

Obsessional fear of unknown, foreign, and therefore apparently dangerous forces represented by other races can only be cured by the discovery of that deep security which is the gift of faith in God's sovereign rule. On the other hand it is quite clear that this fundamental motivation will be ineffective unless two conditions be fulfilled. These two conditions are clearly formulated by Dr. O. F. Nolde in the Message for Race Relations Sunday, 1953.[2] They are: "a manifest change of attitude on the part of enough people to affect public opinion" and "concerted planning and action by *both* parties". In a number of countries the Churches are able to fulfil these conditions. They reach a very large section of the population. They have in their own life or through their relationships in

[1] Reinhold Niebuhr. *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* London, 1945, p. 96.
[2] National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., February 1953

the ecumenical movement unique possibilities for inter-racial co-operation.

They have therefore the opportunity to manifest that the Christian faith gives men that humility, that sense of responsibility, that awareness of fundamental inter-racial kinship, which can destroy the barriers that today divide mankind.

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